

A SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE ON FACTORS THAT AFFECT PREVENTION QUALITY



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Introduction

Many social, health, and educational problems are caused by the same factors—a cross-sectoral approach is therefore needed to succeed in prevention.

The Estonian prevention system can be described as siloed and inefficient: prevention means different things to different people, while funding is often project-based and not linked to evidence, and results about effects are not normally assessed.

Aim: to explore the components and needs of the Estonian cross-sectoral system for the prevention of social, health, and education problems in order to provide suggestions on how to raise the quality of prevention strategies.

Theoretical framework ¹

Critical paradigm

Reality is shaped by social, political, cultural, and economic values. Critical theory not only aims to explore problems, but aspires to identify strategies that could ensure successful implications for society.

Systems theory

To understand the complexity of reality, interactions between the parts of a system should be studied, rather than studying parts in isolation.

Model for an overall prevention system

The EMCDDA (2019) model for an overall prevention system describes five components: organization, research and quality assurance, interventions, workforce, and target populations.

¹ Von Bertalanffy L. General system theory. New York: George Braziller; 1968.
European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. Drug prevention: exploring a systems perspective. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union; 2019.
Aliyu AA, Bello MU, Kasim R, Martin D. Positivist and Non-Positivist Paradigm in Social Science Research: Conflicting Paradigms or Perfect Partners? Journal of Management and Sustainability 2014; 4(3): 79-95.

Methods

Three stages:

- I. Preliminary analysis of the Estonian prevention system was drafted based on the EMCDDA (2019) model for prevention systems.
- II. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with local, regional, and national policymakers (N = 19) in 2020.
- III. Reflexive thematic analysis embracing subjectivity and creativity was used to conceptualize the final themes.

Results

Six themes were conceptualized with one overarching theme: advocacy and communication.

Advocacy and communication

- Prevention must be illustrated and framed in clear ways in order to be understood similarly.
- Strong advocacy is needed to explain the importance of prevention, increase the demand for effective interventions, and evaluate interventions.
- Evaluation of interventions must be framed as creating the opportunity for development, rather than as judgement or rating.
- The effectiveness of preventive interventions must be communicated in better ways to eliminate the dissemination of harmful approaches.

Legislation and policy	Leadership and structure	Funding	Research and data collection	Interventions	Workforce
There is a need for cross-sectoral agreement regarding prevention as well as for strategic plans to link different topics, reflect a unified approach, set priorities, and reach goals.	Agreements about roles and responsibilities are required. More competencies are required at a regional level to enable support and advice at a local level.	Funding must be based on shared priorities, goals, and standards. Decisions must be transparent and follow a long-term plan to be able to affect outcomes.	Universities and colleges need to be more involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of prevention activities. Up-to-date local data is needed for sound decision-making.	Regularly updated overviews of the available preventive interventions are essential. New interventions must be adapted or developed for different target groups and settings.	There is a need to improve basic and continuous education curriculums. There is a need to agree about prevention workforce requirements.

Practical implications

